

Securing Support

Getting Input to Sustain Buy-in for Prevention Partnerships

Reflection Guide and Tip Sheet

This tool is for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program staff interested in strengthening partnerships with Child Welfare (CW) programs that promote [Purpose 1 of TANF](#) to ensure children can be cared for in their own homes. When families have unmet basic needs, such as insufficient food, housing, or childcare, they are at increased risk for involvement in the CW system¹. Partnerships between TANF and CW can help coordinate services to ensure families' material needs are met and families can stay together. This tool includes reflection questions and tips along with real-world examples of collaboration between TANF and CW programs.

Reflection Questions



Securing buy-in for TANF-CW partnerships is essential to building a strong and effective collaboration—but it doesn't happen on its own. Earning buy-in from frontline staff, community partners, and the families you serve requires intentional outreach and sustained engagement. And once that support is in place, maintaining it is equally important. Use the reflection questions below to explore how your agency can build and sustain buy-in for a prevention initiative.

Strategic Thinking & Mindset

What does "buy-in" mean to you?
To your agency?

How might building sustaining buy-in and gathering input from partners affect:

- Staff who provide services?
- The participants you serve?
- Your program outcomes?

Why is sustaining buy-in and gathering input important to you? Why is it important to your agency?

How might getting input on a strategy early in the process influence your outcomes?

A Video Series on TANF and Child Welfare



Partnerships to Promote Purpose 1: Lessons Learned from FAST-LC

The Office of Family Assistance partnered with the Children's Bureau to develop the [Families Are Stronger Together Learning Community \(FAST-LC\)](#), which focused on preventing family involvement in the child welfare system through developing, implementing, and enhancing TANF-CW partnerships and innovations. FAST-LC was a one-year initiative that involved 10 Tribal and state TANF and CW agencies.

This reflection guide and tip sheet accompanies a video on [Securing Support: Getting Input to Sustain Buy-in for Prevention Partnerships](#), which highlights lessons from the FAST-LC. The video features TANF and CW representatives from Arizona and Iowa who discuss how they secured buy-in from program staff, agency leadership, community partners, and families to enhance services that help keep families together.

Understanding Context & Readiness

What are your current strategies for building buy-in and gathering input with:

- Staff who provide services?
- Program leaders
- The participants you serve?

How might you improve these current strategies?

How does your agency's structure matter for potential strategies for building buy-in with these different groups?

With whom do you already have buy-in and with whom do you need to develop additional buy-in?

How might you identify the first steps for building buy-in with different groups?



Key Insights from the Field



To build effective and sustainable partnerships between TANF and CW agencies, Arizona and Iowa used a range of strategies that center community trust, leadership engagement, and family voice.



Ground efforts in the needs of families and frontline staff. Starting with an understanding of current needs and challenges can help focus planning for a potential TANF-CW partnership. To develop this understanding, programs can hold listening sessions and conduct surveys with families and frontline workers. Sharing insights from these engagements with leadership can help ensure strategic plans reflect current needs and facilitate leadership buy-in about the importance of the partnership.



Partner with trusted community programs. Arizona DCS and DES partnered with a faith-based program already well-known in the community to build trust and credibility with parents and facilitate early community buy-in for their prevention strategy.



Work with key leaders to establish legitimacy and support engagement. Building partnerships across agencies often means that staff are not familiar with each other's work and services. Programs can use key agency leadership as champions of the strategy to signal internal commitment and encourage other staff to get on board.



Include families in strategy development to reduce stigma. CW involvement can be traumatic for families. Programs can work with families to co-create informational outreach materials that are respectful and approachable. Arizona and Iowa found this approach to be key for engaging families in prevention services.



Use data to demonstrate progress and sustain leadership support. Programs can track the number of families engaging with prevention services and regularly share data with leadership to demonstrate progress towards goals. Maintaining frequent communication with leadership can help sustain their support, elevate insights from frontline staff, and reinforce the partnership's ongoing relevance and credibility.

Arizona and Iowa Secure Input and Buy-in to Inform and Strengthen TANF-CW Partnerships



Getting Support from Trusted Community Partners Early on

In FAST-LC, the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) and Department of Economic Support (DES) [invested early](#) to get buy-in with community partners and with leadership. Specifically, Arizona partnered with community-based and faith-based organizations to build trust and gather input from families.



Gathering Input from Staff and Families

In FAST-LC, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services led a [series of activities](#) to get input from frontline staff and TANF participants about the current landscape of TANF and child welfare programs and needs in the state and to gather suggestions about how their agency might make changes to better support prevention goals. Executive leadership used this input to consider options for their TANF-CW partnership effort.



From Reflection to Action

How can you use these insights to start or advance your own TANF-CW partnership? Consider these questions to help you identify immediate opportunities, align action with purpose, and set the stage for meaningful progress.

- Who are the key partners and decision-makers you need to engage early—and how will you build authentic relationships with them?

- What data or examples can you use to clearly communicate your goals, demonstrate early outcomes, and reinforce support?
- What communication approach would resonate most with your internal teams to spark initial buy-in and long-term commitment?
- What's one low-risk idea for securing buy-in and input that you could make progress on within the next month? What do you need to get started?



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